

## PURPOSE

This policy sets forth the guidance for all departmental media relations and contact with the press. It is the policy of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) that all press/media contact shall be coordinated through the MDHHS Public Information Officer (PIO). As the primary media contact, the PIO will determine the proper course of action for responding to and reaching out to the media. All departmental outreach to the media must first be reviewed and approved by the PIO. Media phone calls in response to critical incidents shall be routed to the PIO. All press events must be coordinated through the PIO.

This policy applies to all MDHHS employees, including those located centrally, as well as employees in MDHHS hospitals, centers, and local offices, throughout the state.

## DEFINITIONS

Inquiries from the media refer to phone calls, emails, or being approached in person by a member of the media or news outlet. Reaching out to the media may include a press release, media advisory, phone call, correction, email, press conference or event, or any other such outreach.

The term **media** refers to all print, television, radio, or other such media outlets, as well as any Internet media sources such as newsletters, websites, or blogs. Print media includes all newspapers, magazines, and other printed publications. Television media refers to both cable and network media outlets, including MGTV. The following general information applies to this policy.

## POLICY

### Primary Media Contact

It is the policy of the MDHHS that the primary media contact for MDHHS is the PIO. All media phone calls and contacts shall be routed to the PIO for a response. Staff members, other than the PIO, shall not talk to reporters in an official capacity unless authorized to do so by the PIO. Use the following as a guideline when responding to the media:

“I am going to refer you to the MDHHS Public Information Officer, who can provide a full view of your issue. The PIO has a broad perspective on department issues and is the person

best suited to respond to media inquiries. The PIO is in the Director's Office at 517-241-2112. Thank you."

### **Interviews/Contact with the Media**

All interviews with the media shall be coordinated by the PIO. The PIO may authorize other department members to be interviewed based on the nature of the subject.

### **Critical Incidents/Emergency Communications**

Critical incidents likely to generate media phone calls require the immediate notification of the PIO. Once alerted, the PIO will coordinate responses to the media. Examples of critical incidents include but are not limited to: breaking issues related to abuse or neglect, major outbreaks of infections or new health risks, environmental or weather events with health implications, major disasters with health implications, etc. This may involve coordinating internal employee communications as well as working with the Governor's Communications Office.

### **Press Releases**

All press releases from MDHHS are to be coordinated and distributed through the PIO. The PIO is responsible for obtaining executive approval prior to the distribution of all press releases.

### **Letters to the Editor**

If a MDHHS staff member submits or responds to letters to the editor, he/she may not represent departmental viewpoints unless first cleared with the PIO.

### **Editorial Board Meetings**

Attendance at Editorial Board Meetings of newspapers must be approved by the PIO if the attendee will be representing the viewpoints of MDHHS.

### **Approval of Quotes**

When approached for quotes from partner organizations, the quotes must be approved by the PIO. Approval of a quote for one instance does not constitute approval for the quote to be used in another.

**PROCEDURE****MDHHS Employee**

1. Notifies the MDHHS PIO in the following situations:  
approached by the media for information, learns of a critical incident that may generate media questions, or is approached by the media or a partner for a quote.
2. Contacts the MDHHS PIO for input and approval prior to:  
writing a letter to the editor on behalf of the department regarding department policy or business, writing a press release, or attending an editorial board meeting to discuss department policy or business.

**MDHHS Public Information Officer**

3. Coordinates response to the media and obtains the necessary executive approval.
4. Provides feedback and guidance to the employee as to how the media issue will be handled.

**CONTACT**

For additional information, please contact the MDHHS Communications office at 517-241-2112.